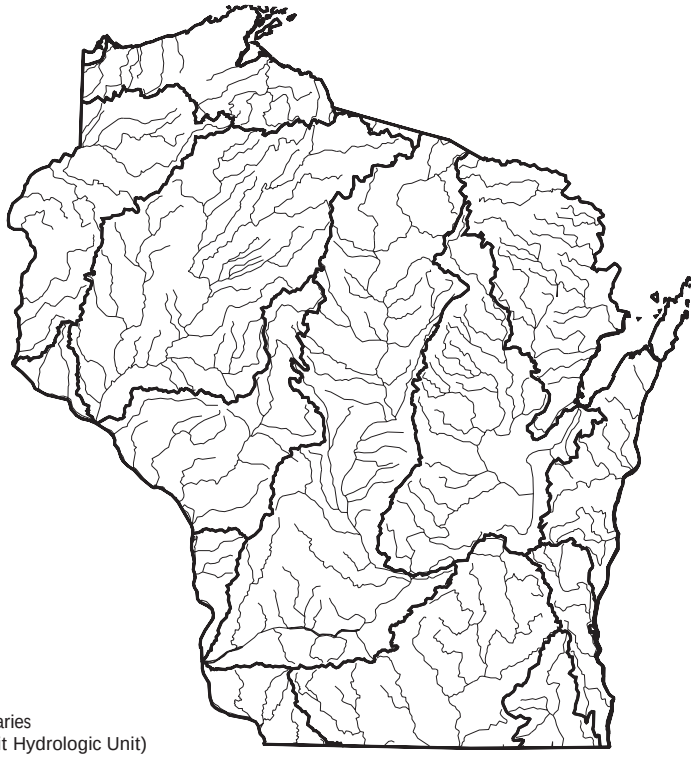
Wisconsin



Basin Boundaries
(USGS 6-Digit Hydrologic Unit)

For a copy of the Wisconsin 1996 305(b) report, contact:

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Surface Water Quality

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) found that 33% of the surveyed river miles fully support aquatic life uses, 23% support these uses now but are threatened, 36% partially support aquatic life uses, and 8% do not support aquatic life uses. The most prevalent problems in rivers are habitat and flow alterations, siltation, excessive nutrients, and oxygen-depleting substances. The sources of these problems are often polluted runoff, especially in agricultural areas, and river modifications, such as ditching, straightening, and the loss of wetlands alongside streams. Wastewater discharges also moderately impair more than 2,270 miles of streams.

About 37% of the surveyed lake acres fully support aquatic life uses, 3% support these uses but are threatened, 55% partially support these uses, and 6% do not support aquatic life uses. The primary source of lake degradation is deposition of airborne pollutants, especially mercury, and polluted runoff. All of Wisconsin's Great Lakes' shoreline partially supports fish consumption use due to fish consumption advisories posted throughout the Great Lakes. Bacteria from urban runoff also impair swimming along 60 miles of shoreline.

Ground Water Quality

The primary sources of ground water contamination in Wisconsin are agricultural activities, municipal landfills, leaking underground storage tanks, abandoned hazardous waste sites, and spills. Other sources include septic tanks and land application of wastewater. Nitrate-nitrogen is the most common ground water contaminant. Nitrates come from fertilizers, animal waste storage sites and feedlots, municipal and industrial wastewater and sludge disposal, refuse disposal areas, and leaking septic systems.

Programs to Restore Water Quality

WDNR is integrating multiple agencies, programs, interests, and jurisdictions in an "ecosystem approach" that looks at all parts of the ecosystem when addressing water quality—the land that drains to the waterbody, the air above it, the plants, animals, and people using it. Since the 1970s, WDNR has prepared water quality management plans for each of the State's river basins that summarize the condition of waters in each basin, identify improvements and needs, and make recommendations for cleanup or protection. WDNR updates the plans every 5 years and uses the plans to rank watersheds for priority projects under the Wisconsin Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Abatement Program and to address wastewater discharge concerns.

Programs to Assess Water Quality

In 1992, Wisconsin implemented a surface water monitoring strategy to support river basin planning. The strategy integrates monitoring and management activities in each of the State's river basins on the 5-year basin planning schedule. In recent years, Wisconsin has placed more emphasis on monitoring polluted runoff and toxic substances in bottom sediments and tissues of fish and wildlife.

Individual Use Support in Wisconsin

Designated Use[a]	Total Miles Surveyed	Percent Good (Fully Supporting)	Good (Threatened)	Fair (Partially Supporting)	Poor (Not Supporting)	Poor (Not Attainable)
Rivers and Streams (Total Miles = 57,698)[b]						
	19,149	33	23	36	8	-
	2,962	77	4	14	5	-
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lakes (Total Acres = 982,155)[c]						
	64,510	37	3	55	6	-
	105,596	59	0	0	41	-
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Great Lakes (Total Miles = 1,017)						
	1,017	0	79	21	0	0
	1,017	0	0	100	0	0
	1,017	90	4	4	2	0

– Not reported in a quantifiable format or unknown.
NA = Not applicable because use is not designated in State standards.

[a] A subset of Wisconsin's designated uses appear in this figure. Refer to the State's 305(b) report for a full description of the State's uses.
[b] Includes nonperennial streams that dry up and do not flow all year.

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.